

A
S E R M O N
Preach'd at the
F U N E R A L
O F

Mr. GEORGE ELLIOTT,
of *Reading*.

Who died *November 3, 1729.*
in the 80th Year of his Age.

By P E T E R B E L B I N.

L O N D O N :

Printed for AARON WARD, at the
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MEMOIR

of the

GENERAL

OF

MR. GEORGE BENTLEY



Who died June 20, 1809,
in the 80th Year of his Age.

By PETER BELLIN

LONDON:

Printed for Aaron Ward, at the
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Price 1s.

To the Mournful

**Widow and Children of the
Deceased.**

MY FRIENDS,

TIS at your desire I consent to the publication of the following SERMON, of which, otherwise, I should have entertain'd no thoughts: But when I have, at once, the opportunity of answering the requests of my living friends, as well as paying a tribute to the memory of the dead; and, what is more, some prospect of doing good to souls; these are no small inducements; and tho' it may want those ornaments,

iv *The* DEDICATION.

naments, which are expected in this polite age; yet if, through the divine blessing, it become serviceable to those serious Christians, who make conscience of leading the life described in the former, and have good hopes of those glorious privileges contain'd in the latter part of it, I shall think my self abundantly rewarded. That the God of all grace may render it advantageous to you, who are more intimately concern'd, and to all others, into whose hands it may come, is the desire and prayer of,



Your obliged Friend,

and humble Servant,

PETER BELBIN.

PHIL. I. 21.

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

BEING call'd to this service by an affecting providence, the removal of a valuable friend: The improvement of this excellent passage will, I hope, be very suitable to such an occasion; since here we are assur'd from the word of God, that the death of our pious friends, though it be a loss to us, to the world, and to the church; yet is that loss abundantly made up by the rich advantages which accrue to them. The scriptures teach us that the dead who die in the Lord are blessed; and that those who sleep in Jesus God will bring with him; and here, that death is the believer's gain; these are arguments of an excellent tendency to compose our minds; and for these reasons is an immoderate sorrow forbidden to christians. Let us therefore not suffer the death of our pious relations to fill us with murmuring; or too much to depress our minds; but may we rather follow them by an eye of faith, and look upwards to the bright and blessed world; there shall we see them exulting in immortal joy, and be convinc'd that they are infinitely gainers by death. St.

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Paul,

Paul, the inspired writer of this epistle, being in bonds at Rome for his Master's cause, and the preaching of the gospel, sent this treasure of excellent instructions, and divine comforts to the church at Philippi; in which, after his apostolical benediction, and the assurances of that great love he had for them, he acquaints 'em, how far the design of his enemies was over-rul'd by the good providence of God; and that his imprisonment, and sufferings, instead of being a hindrance to, had occasion'd the spreading of the gospel; in as much as his patience and constancy, amidst his afflictions, had tended to confirm and embolden his fellow christians. Then he expresses a hearty resignation to the will of God, declaring his earnest expectation, and hope, that in nothing he should be ashamed; but that Christ should be magnified in him, whether it were by life or by death. He had then near views of death, being in the hands of his enemies, who thirsted for his blood; yet see him, even then, discovering the excellent spirit and temper of a true christian when grace prevails. He then deliberates upon the weighty business of dying; and makes an admirable estimation both of life and death. In one scale he lays the duties, which, whilst living, he hoped to render to Christ; and the mighty happiness, to which death would bring him, in the other. Here he places service; and there the reward. See the accounts summ'd up on both sides, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

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He is neither terrified at death, being sensible of its advantages; nor weary of life, having learn'd to improve it. If God has any further service for him, he consents to live; but if his warfare be accomplished, and his work done; he's not then so ignorant of his own good, but he knows how to determine in favour of death. His resolutions are fixed for God, he has the glory of Christ in view; if living, Christ shall have the honour of his service; if dying, he hopes the enjoyment of his Lord. If he tarry longer in the flesh, he'll improve that space to the glory of his God; but if the time of his departure be come, he's then humbly confident of a blessed admission into the coelestial kingdom. Now, though these words contain, primarily, the glorious triumphs of St. Paul's faith, and his elevated hope of heaven; yet is the experience of many christians near akin to that of the apostle. The scope of their life, though in a private and inferior capacity, is the same; and the same their expectations of a glorious immortality. All believers live to Christ; and many of 'em have a lively hope of enjoying him. I think this to be the true sense of the text, and which is also supported by writers of good note^a; and taking the words in this view, I shall attempt from them these two things.

I. To set before you the duties of a living christian, and then,

^a Vide Polum in Loc.

II. SHew you the advantages of a departed saint.

I. To set before you the duties of a living christian. St. Paul, consider'd as an apostle, an eminent servant of Christ, may be supposed to have spoken these words with reference to his ministry: He resolves with great faithfulness, and indefatigable diligence, to preach the gospel; and with all his power to promote the interests of his Lord's kingdom. With the like desire and resolution, will every sincere follower of the holy Jesus, in his proper sphere, aim at the service and glory of his blessed Lord. Every true believer receives all from Christ, and refers all to him. The Lord Jesus, by his grace, is the author of spiritual life to his people; and the purchaser too of their eternal life of glory. To the meritorious undertakings of the Son of God is the christian indebted for the blessings of divine grace at present, and the hope of immortal happiness hereafter; hence therefore he very justly infers, that "whether living, or dying, he is the Lord's." And accordingly I shall proceed to shew, how St. Paul's words, "To me to live is Christ," are made good in the life of every true christian.

1. HE makes the gospel of Christ his rule; and since the great Prophet of the church has there given us a noble collection of divine precepts; clearly reveal'd his Father's will; and plainly taught us our duty; from these sacred leaves will the obedient believer derive the

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the rules of his conduct, and exercise a constant endeavour, to transcribe the doctrine of Jesus in a pure life and holy conversation. Christ has pronounc'd, that by keeping his commandments we shall evidence our selves to be his disciples; and that they who hear his word, and do it are blessed; thus therefore the serious believer resolves with himself, I'll constantly endeavour, O dearest Lord, to retain thy word in my heart, and produce its fruits in my life. And tho' the best of men are, in this state, attended with a multitude of defects, and far from exhibiting a compleat obedience; yet 'tis their desire, and endeavour, to live according to the scripture rule; and the imperfection of their obedience occasions them no small trouble. Every true christian hath a mixed love and fear of God abiding in his heart; and where these are, they never fail of producing a general obedience to his sacred precepts.

2. THE life of Christ is his pattern. Since the Son of God came down to tabernacle in flesh, and exemplified, in his own life, the doctrine he taught, it affords us no small advantage to the proper conduct of our lives. In thy holy life, O blessed Jesus, were virtue and goodness, piety and religion, displayed to the greatest perfection; thy life was adorned with every grace, and the holy converse of heaven, by thee, brought down to earth. Would we therefore live according to the rules, and answerably to the hope of christianity, let us
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frequently read the history of Christ, and attentively view the steps he trod; which, no doubt, will be found a noble pattern of, and a sublime motive to, the practice of all those virtues which should adorn the life of every Christian; and thus we are exhorted to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Jesus Christ. His ready obedience to his Father's will, teaches us also the obedience which we owe our heavenly Father. The zeal he discovered for his Father's honour demands our imitation. His patience, meekness, humility, and every other grace, afford us a divine pattern of substantial goodness, and a powerful motive to labour after the same excellencies; and to do this, is the duty of all God's people. Therefore, says St. John^a, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." All true believers own the obligation, and desire to discharge it; and, in this respect, may they well say with the Apostle, "To me to live is Christ."

3. THE Spirit of Christ is the guide of all the saints; their souls are influenced by divine grace, and the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts. God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into them, to enlighten their minds, sanctify their nature, and gradually destroy the power of sin; that so, being made partakers of the divine nature, they may grow up into the likeness of the Lord Jesus. To this

^a 1 Epist. ii. 6.

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Spirit of Christ the sincere believer yields obedience, and desires to be more and more instructed by him; that so he may be led into all truth, and disposed to every duty. From this agency of God's holy Spirit, on the believing soul, doth St. Paul borrow those expressions, of walking in the Spirit, and bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit. The gift of the holy Spirit is a noble blessing, which Christ has purchased for his people; and to this divine Monitor is every sincere believer obedient. He improves the motions of the new nature, and follows, or desires to follow, the workings of grace on his soul. Give me, says he, O my Lord, more of thy Spirit, and enrich my soul with the treasures of thy grace; and, for this reason also, may he well say with the Apostle, "To me to live is Christ."

4. THE glory of God and Christ is his end. It may be said that we glorify God, when our lives are spent in his service, and beautified with the fruits of holiness; "Therefore, says our Lord, herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit." Christ is glorified, when the assistances of his Spirit, and the power of his gospel, are displayed in the sanctity of his people; when we proceed with delightful diligence in his service; when we speak of his goodness to our souls; extol his grace; recommend his excellencies; persuade others to repent and believe; when we invite them to be joined to the blessed Jesus, and to serve the Lord together with us. When we do
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our utmost to destroy the kingdom of satan, by abstaining from sin our selves; opposing it in others, and stemming the torrent of vice in a wicked world, then we glorify Christ. The man who assumes a truly Christian magnanimity, and has the holy courage to appear for God and religion in a world of iniquity and prophaneness, that dares to own the ways of Christ amidst a despising multitude; such an one glorifies his Lord, and lives to him. The Christian, who, amidst a thousand alluring objects of sense, that would draw off his affections from divine things, and seduce his heart from God, does yet walk by faith, assiduously contemplating the bright and blessed mansions of the just, and the crown of righteousness prepared for them that love God, and in the hope of obtaining that heavenly Inheritance, and entering into the promis'd rest, is resolved to run with patience the race set before him; such an one renders a revenue of glory to his God and Saviour, and for him to live is Christ. He that deviates from the vulgar road, and forsakes the unthinking multitude that hasten to destruction, and enters on a religious life, notwithstanding all the opposition and contempt of the world; that spends his days in the important work of preparation for eternity, and discovers a suitable concern for his immortal soul; a business which, by most, is wretchedly neglected: He who endeavours to please the Lord, by giving all diligence to make his calling and election sure, and presses forward,

towards

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towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; such an one lives to Christ. To trust in the all-sufficient sacrifice of the cross; to live upon the divine treasures of grace laid up in Jesus the Mediator; to render him that homage and obedience which are due to him as our Lord and our God; to improve our talents, i.e. all our mercies, enjoyments, and opportunities well; with fidelity and diligence, as expecting a future account; to redeem our precious time by a prudent management; in a word, to consecrate our lives to the noble purposes of religion and godliness; this is glorifying God, this is living to Christ; and by such an one is Christ glorified, as the apostle says, whether living or dying. From what has been said, I shall now deduce a few inferences, before I proceed to the second general head. And,

I. HERE then, as in a mirror, may we behold the vast difference between the life of a sincere christian and that of other men. 'Tis a noble exercise, a glorious employment to serve our God, and live to our Redeemer. Little is the world acquainted with the excellency of the christian life; there's a wide distance between the purposes and courses of saints, and sinners, believers, and unbelievers; and no less difference shall there be in their eternal state: The serious christian acts wisely, and discovers the greatest prudence; the prophane person acts irrationally, and betrays the most egregious folly; for the former to live,

is Christ; but for the latter, a wretched accumulation of sin and guilt: The one dishonours his Maker, and is swiftly hastening to destruction; the other hath his fruit unto holiness, and the end shall be everlasting life.

2. HENCE also may we learn the divine art of living as we ought. He that doth not live to God and Christ, had a thousand times better never have been born. The end for which we were made, is to glorify God; he therefore that indulges a licentious course, and casts away the fear of God, is far from answering the ends of his being. 'Tis a sad reflection on the folly of the multitude, that the whole creation besides observes the laws of nature, and performs the divine will; but man alone, to the disgrace of his reason and intellectual powers, is bold in sin, dares to affront his almighty maker; and, instead of pursuing his own happiness, acts as though he were desirous of inviting destruction, and rendering himself miserable. Let this reflection pierce the consciences of the ungodly, and shew them the necessity of a speedy repentance and reformation, "for the wages of sin is death."

3. IF for the saints to live is Christ, this may, in some measure, reconcile the christian to all the inconveniencies of the present world; and which especially attend an advanced age; this may make him content to remain here during the divine pleasure, even tho' he may seem capable of doing but little for Christ; for
since

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since to glorify God is the scope of his life, while that purpose remains, opportunities of doing something for the honour of our God and Redeemer will not be altogether wanting. Often have I heard aged christians complaining thus: "Why should I tarry here any longer? I am worn out with age; I can neither hear God's word, nor come to his ordinances; no longer perform either the duties of God's house, or the duties of my own house; nature is quite exhausted, and it's high time for me to leave this world:" But this surely is a great mistake, the afflicted, aged christian little knows what service he does for Christ. It brings no small honour to Christ and the Gospel, when such an one bears the burden of his infirmities with patience; and having liv'd to see the days wherein the things of this world can afford him no pleasure, is yet refresh'd with the consolations of Christ, and the views of a better state in the world to come. Tho' his body bend towards the grave, and his eyes be dim with age, yet the inner man is strengthened, and the eye of faith directed to heaven, surveying those regions of immortal pleasure, whither Jesus the fore-runner is already enter'd, and whither his people are shortly to follow him. His lively hope of a happier state hereafter, is a sharp reproof to the negligence of those about him; it gives them an affecting lesson of the vanity of this world, and the necessity of looking after a better. His good example and grave admonitions may make a deep impression on the

minds of his relations; for when years and experience teach; when one who is himself on the borders of the grave, and lives in the near views of an eternal world, shall reprove our vanity, and inculcate on us the necessity of religion, who shall refuse to hear? who shall neglect to learn? The life of a good christian therefore will never be barren of some services to Christ, even to the last, and 'tis no mean privilege to those about him.

4. 'Tis a just and useful remark, that the apostle places service first, and the reward afterwards; a holy life must precede, and the advantages of death will follow. May we therefore remember that it highly concerns us to commence a sacred acquaintance with our God and Saviour, and to render him the fruits of an obedient, holy life, if we desire to make a comfortable end, and be happy for ever. The husbandman hath first his seed time, which as he that neglects will have no fruits at the harvest, so he that stupidly omits the necessary improvement of life, will never reap the advantages of death and future rewards of the righteous. Our life is given us for noble purposes, and happy's the man who has the divine art of improving it; the space of life, and season of our probation is a valuable enjoyment to such as have learnt to use the opportunity.

BUT following the apostle's method, in the text, let me now pass from the duties of life to the advantages of death, to which St. Paul evidently gives the preference. Life indeed is

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a great mercy afforded us for our own good, and the good of others; but when once we have so far improv'd it, as to settle our affairs with God, and to enjoy the evidences of his favour, then death becomes eligible. It may perhaps seem more to the advantage of our friends and families, and of the church too, ~~that we should live longer~~; but if we regard our own good, then to die is better; to die is gain. Give me leave therefore to explain this scripture paradox, and illustrate a truth so contrary to the common opinion of men: Can death, that has so stern a visage, so formidable an aspect, that's originally and naturally so full of evils, be expected to do us any good? And is it possible that any advantage can be deriv'd from so implacable an adversary to nature? Is not this the enemy that has bereft us of our friends; removed our indulgent parents and nearest relatives; and rent from our embraces our dear children and beloved consorts? What favour then can we look for at his hands? Can he that has no regard for the good, the wise and virtuous, but alike levels his fatal dart at all, and, with inflexible cruelty, is deaf to the most moving entreaties; yea, the Tyrant, that has humbled so many generations to the dust, and yet retains in his possession the precious remains of so many departed saints, be reasonably deem'd a friend? or is it likely that any sweetness can be found in the execrable carcass of this lion? Doth not this enemy death, separate us from the world and
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the church, make sore breaches in our families; and often furnish us with woful matter of overwhelming lamentation? Will he not shortly snatch us from our enjoyments, and leave us nothing to possess, but a little obscure tenement, a cold and silent grave? Where then is the gain of death, and in what unknown regions shall we search for those advantages, which will compensate the manifest losses we sustain? To say, therefore, that death is gainful, is to advance an opinion directly opposite to the common sentiments of men, and which has the air and appearance of a gross contradiction: Well, all these objections, 'tis confest, are weighty; death's attended with all these consequences; has naturally all these evils in it, and many more; but for thee, O christian, by a miracle of divine grace, are all these seeming evils converted into real blessings. Through the meritorious obedience and sufferings of a glorious redeemer, is this enemy become thy friend; death and the grave are sanctified; the tombs of the saints are sacred dormitories; where they rest in hopes of Christ's illustrious appearance, and wait for the bright morning of the resurrection. Death, indeed, is full of curses to the wicked, but comes laden with blessings to the righteous: 'Tis the worst thing that can happen to an ungodly, but the best that can befall a good man. To evince which, I shall spread before you the numerous inconveniencies from which death delivers the saints, and the rich variety of blessings to which it leads them; and these things being once consider'd,

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sider'd, it will evidently appear that they have no great reason to be fond of living; nor the least cause to refuse the privilege of dying.

1. To begin then with the inconveniencies from which death delivers the saints. Many are the troubles and uneasinesses of life; from all which, a good man, at his departure hence, is compleatly releas'd: In the prospect of which we may justly say, death performs for him a most friendly office. Solomon complains of the travel, which God hath given to the sons of men, to be exercised therein^a. He pronounces this state to be full of vanity and vexation of spirit^b. Job says, "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards:" i. e. by a necessity of nature^c. All the enjoyments of this world have their mixture of evil and sorrow: Every condition of life is attended with its exercises and disappointments: Many things there are to discompose our minds, and disorder our bodies: We meet with many crosses both personal and relative: The evils of life are epidemical, and no height of power and greatness, no acquisitions of honour and riches will secure from them. Crown'd heads are no more exempted from the unavoidable troubles of life, than the meanest peasant; nor can the most excellent christian be delivered from these inconveniencies: Our great master has told us, that in the world we must expect tribulation; but for all these, death is an infallible remedy; to death are the saints obliged for their happy deliverance

^a Eccl. iii. 10. ^b Eccl. i. 14. ^c Job v. 7.

out of a multitude of troubles; from which, whilst living, they could not escape. They that die in the Lord, shall labour under hardships no more; endure injuries no more; sustain losses no more; never utter a complaint, drop a tear or vent a sigh any more; they shall have no more vexation, or sorrow for ever. Now to be delivered from the inconveniencies of life, is worth dying for; and in this respect death is gain.

DEATH will also deliver the saints from sinful company, and the allurements of the world; it removes them from a place full of sin, and conveys them from the abhorred regions of transgression and iniquity. The sincere followers of Jesus, are grieved at the abounding impiety of others; their righteous souls are afflicted with the wickedness of the multitude, and often too, with the irreligious lives of those who belong to their own families; and are nearly related to them. The prophet Jeremy wishes for a cottage in the wilderness, that he might no longer behold his people's rebellion against God^a. And the Psalmist complains of his sojourning in Mesech, and dwelling in the tents of Kedar^b. To see the general prophaneness of the world, and observe the growing vices of the times, is no small affliction to a true christian; it kindles in his soul a pious indignation against the enemies of his God; but death shall put an end to this. The departed saints shall no more hear the oaths and curses, nor

^a Jer. ix. 2. ^b Psalm cxx. 5.

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behold any of those guilty scenes which the servants of satan are acting; they shall no more be vexed with vain company; no more have the flame of their devotion damp'd by the foolish conversation of others; and no more shall their hearts be seduced from God, and divine things, by the flattering objects of sense; therefore death, in this respect, is highly advantageous.

IT delivers the saints also from pains and sickness; the decays of nature, and burden of age: Often are these feeble bodies shaken with distempers: What a number of afflictions attend us, that make us pass many of our days in sorrow! Many a child of God is crying out under acute pains; or lying on a languishing pillow: This fatal legacy has Adam entail'd on all his posterity, and for these is there no other remedy than death: But even supposing any should 'scape these, and not be much visited with sickness or pain, yet, in a few years, will he feel the decays of nature, and complain of the burden of age; his animal spirits will be exhausted, and the powers of nature fail; his intellectual faculties, his perception and memory will be impaired; gray hairs surround him, his ears are deaf, his eyes dim, his sleep departs, his speech falters, his appetite is lost, his hands shake, his legs tremble, and can scarce support their tottering weight; he complains that the days of darkness and sorrow are come upon him, days in which there is no pleasure; and that his flesh and heart fail; from all these is death a happy release to a good man; it re-

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moves the burden from his shoulders, and effectually silences his complaints.

To which we may also add, the deliverance which the christian gains by death, from indwelling sin: Sin, that hated inmate, that inveterate enemy, with which the poor believer has so long been vexed: The remains of corruption and sin are a sore exercise to God's people: For this did a great apostle cry out, "O! wretched man that I am": How many sighs, complaints and tears, has this adversary to grace, occasion'd the children of God! How has it made them lament and mourn, and forc'd them to cry out, in the pathetick language of the Psalmist; "O! that I had the wings of a dove, then would I flee away, and be at rest". Death is the only remedy for this evil; it's calculated to the christian's advantage, in this respect. The departed saints sin no more, have no more inclinations to sin: Being stript of this polluted garment the flesh, their holy souls ascend all pure to God, and shall no more offend him; and would'st not thou, O christian, be willing to die, to be deliver'd from sin, to be compleatly cleans'd from transgressions and backslidings?

DEATH will also deliver the servants of God from the temptations of the devil. Many indeed are the afflictions of the righteous; but none of 'em is equal to the terrible assaults of satan. How often, O poor believer, has the roaring lion been ready to devour thee? often has he tempted thee to sin, and to abuse the grace of God; and has spread before thee, all the gay
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scenes of criminal pleasure, to engage thy compliance; and at other times perhaps, he has almost plung'd thee into despair, and has brought, as it were, the flames of hell flashing in thy face: This enemy has sorely griev'd thee, shot at thee, and hated thee; but all this shall for ever cease at death, and thou shalt no more complain of his attempts: No tempter shall follow thee within the gates of heaven: In vain may satan practise his horrid arts against the departed saints; within the gates of the new Jerusalem they shall remain in everlasting safety, and enjoy eternal peace in the holy habitation of God. Death therefore is the believer's gain.

By death shall the christian be deliver'd also from his doubts and fears. At some seasons indeed we enjoy comfortable hopes of heaven, and the light of God shineth upon our souls; this maketh us to rejoice; but anon his face is veil'd in clouds, he withdraws his presence from us, and we seek him, but cannot find him: We question his love; we question our own graces; conclude that we do not belong to Christ, and that God will cast us off for ever: Our sins appear unpardonable, and we fear God will not have mercy upon us; "Thou didst hide thy face, says the Psalmist, and I was troubled^a." Then can the soul find no comfort, the word and ordinances are barren, and tho' there are promises, we cannot lay hold of them; but from all these exercises shall death deliver the

^a Psalm xxx. 7.

saints: They shall never doubt their interest in Christ more; nor question the love of God to them any more; hence therefore it appears, that the death of a believer is advantageous.

DEATH shall also remove the saints out of the regions of darkness and ignorance: Hear a great apostle complaining, "We see but darkly, as through a glass, and know but in part"; Many of the glories of God's nature, and many of the wonders of his grace and providence are hidden from us; some of the articles of our holy religion, tho' great truths, yet are they unfathomable mysteries, and when we attempt to search into them, clouds and darkness hang over our understanding: We stand and wonder at providence, and say, what is God about? what is he doing with me; or what is he doing with his church? We meditate on Jesus the mediator, and are amazed at his wondrous assumption of our nature! We stand surprized at the strange union of divinity and humanity. We consider that much disputed mystery of the trinity; but its overpowering glories are too strong for our feeble sight. We debate upon the profound doctrine of God's decrees, and wonder how the over-ruling will of the great creator, and the free agency of his creature-man shall be reconciled. Our thoughts stretch themselves into eternity, and meditate on the state of the dead; and fain would we know the place, the services, the entertainments and pleasures of the happy spirits, dismiss'd from their bodies. We think of the day of the Lord,
and

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and wait for the morning of the resurrection ; but can, by no means, form an adequate idea of a spiritual body ; nor the amazing transition of the saints, that shall then be found alive, out of this world into the other, from earth to heaven, without laying down their bodies, and calling at the gates of death ; but all these, and ten thousand other wonders, shall be display'd to us in the light of heaven, by a more perfect and noble philosophy than can possibly be communicated to men upon earth ; and this is another advantage of death.

A T death shall good men be removed out of this state of absence from God. God is the supreme good, and the highest happiness of creatures consists in the presence and enjoyment of him : This the saints long for ; God is the centre to which their affections move, by the attractive power of divine grace ; now therefore, to be detain'd here below, at a distance from our father's house, and from those sublime enjoyments, for which man was originally form'd, and for which the saints are, by sovereign grace, prepar'd, this is a great difficulty to believers ; they mourn their absence from God ; they want a more intimate communion and acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, than the mediums of his word and ordinances will afford them : Often does the gracious soul, whilst in the present state, complain of being absent from God, and far from the celestial world ; but death will put an end to this complaint, and is therefore profitable to a believer.

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IT gives the servants of God a rest from all their labours; "blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours"^a. Here has the christian many a difficult and spending duty to perform, laying out himself for God, labouring for Christ; and often he complains, that tho' the spirit be willing, yet the flesh is weak: He's engag'd in a tedious and painful resistance of sin, which yet he can never throughly conquer; but death will lay him to rest, and put an end to all his difficult labours; "there remaineth therefore, a rest to the people of God"^b: To whom, on this account, death is no enemy, but a great friend.

DEATH will also totally and perpetually silence all their complaints of spiritual dulness, earthly mindedness, unsanctified affections, love to the world, imperfection in grace, the naughtiness of their hearts, the violations of their covenant, and their backslidings from God: It shall remove them also from all the hardships of the world, and injuries of the wicked: In a word, every thing that depresses the mind, and sinks the spirits of a christian, and has in any sort tended to render him uneasie, will be remov'd by death. He shall no more complain, I've lost my God amidst the pleasures of the world, or the hurries of business; nor shall any more be vex'd with the reproaches and oppression of the wicked; all these things shall end at death, and that for ever: 'Tis therefore a good

^a Rev. xiv. 13.

^b Heb. iv. 9.

change to the true followers of Jesus Christ, 'tis the believer's gain.

THUS have I briefly set before you the inconveniencies from which the departed saints are delivered ; which are so many, and so great, that to obtain a release from all these, one would even be willing to die. But this is not all ; they are not only delivered from a multitude of troubles and vexations, that are inseparable from this state ; but it leads them also to the enjoyment of whatsoever is truly excellent and desirable ; it puts them into the possession of many vast blessings which can never be obtain'd in this life ; the consideration of which must needs soften our hard thoughts of death, make us think very favourably of the great change, and induce us to say with the apostle, " to die is gain."

THIS is the second part of the gain of death, on which I am now to enter, according to my proposed method ; and the first thing which very aptly presents it self to our thoughts, is this, that death perfects the believer's graces, and puts him into the possession of his expected happiness and glory. Faith is then chang'd into the beatifick vision of God and Christ ; hope is turn'd into the transporting enjoyment of the supreme good ; love is then nobly exalted, and glows with a pure flame like that which fills the breasts of angels. Here the children of God have a mixture of grace and nature, and the principle of holiness is hid under the ashes of corruption and sin ; the best
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of us can but say like him in the gospel, "I believe, Lord, help my unbelief." How much better then will it be with us when removed from these imperfections ! Here we are enabled to rely on Christ, and hope in God's mercy, and place our affections, in some measure, on the supreme good ; but 'tis often, it must be confess'd, in a weak and languid manner ; but such of us as have the happiness to die in the Lord, shall, in the other world, receive the strongest assurances that God the Father, and Jesus the Redeemer, are ours, and never doubt it more ; for then shall we enjoy that substantial blessedness which faith had view'd and hope waited for. At death are the souls of departed saints exalted from earth to heaven ; from a mean to a most honourable state ; therefore it's an advantageous change.

To which we may add, that it puts the people of God into the accomplishment of all the promises. Here, indeed, they have God's covenant well order'd in all things and sure, in which the most high has engaged himself to be the God and Father of believers, and to give them grace and glory. The blessed Jesus has promis'd that his true disciples shall have a place in his father's house ; he has said, I appoint unto you a kingdom ; on these promises do the saints depend, and take God as their exceeding great reward, their portion, and the lot of their inheritance : Now by death shall they gain a blessed accomplishment of all these promises ; which have so often supported them,
and

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and refresh'd their souls. By death they shall gain that immortality and eternal life which is promis'd to all them that do well. The saints releas'd by death are said "to inherit the promises"^a, and is not this, O believer, a glorious thing to have the word of God perform'd, to have promises accomplish'd, and receive all thou hast waited for! Let us therefore look on death as a friend.

'Twill also confer on the saints their reward: First, the reward of Christ's undertakings, who perform'd and suffer'd so much for the sake of his people. The blood of Christ purchased an innumerable train of blessings for all his servants, obtain'd for them a place with his Father above, the glorious inheritance in light, and an immense treasure of enjoyments unknown, unthought of by us, in this mortal state: "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have enter'd into the heart of man, the things which God has laid up for them that love him." The faithful servants of God are said to enter into the joy of their Lord. The saints are entitled "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven"^b. "Henceforth, says the apostle, is laid up for me a crown of righteousness"^c, 'Tis call'd, "a crown of life"^d, and "a crown of glory"^e. And is not this, O christian, worth dying for? Wilt thou not

^a Heb. vi. 12.

^b 1 Pet. i. 4.

^b 2 Tim. iv. 8.

^d Jam. i. 12.

^c 1 Pet. v. 4.

say that death is gain, in the prospect of that great and glorious reward which thou shalt then obtain? And further, tho' I would by no means be thought to imagine that our works and duties are meritorious, yet shall the departed saints receive an additional weight of glory for these also; God accepting their obedience, through the precious merits of his son, will also confer on them a rich reward, as the recompence of their services; and that, in proportion to the various degrees of service, and advancement in holiness; which, I think, is plain, and beyond dispute, from the parable of the Talents, and several other passages of scripture. Here, O christian, thou art sowing, as the apostle calls it, to the spirit; therefore shalt thou, at the end of thy days, reap life, and joy, and peace. Here thou art labouring and striving to obtain heaven, death shall accomplish thy desires; thou shalt then reap the blessed fruits of all thy endeavours.

It shall bring thee also, O sincere believer, to thy father's house, and thy eternal habitation. Here the saints are sojourners and strangers, this world is not the proper seat of their residence: Cicero and others of the wise heathens, call it an inn, and the apostle to the Hebrews says, "we have here no continuing city", but at death, we shall enter into one that "hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God". We are now passing through the world, as Israel through the wilderness; death will conduct us into the heavenly Canaan. Christ
says,

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says, "in my father's house are many mansions", and of these will death make us possessors. Then shall the saints suffer no more removes; but find an everlasting habitation; and there shall they be well accommodated, in a manner suitable to their high dignity, and worthy the sons of God.

BESIDES which, it shall bring those, who have fear'd God and lov'd their Redeemer, to the church triumphant. Here they converse with poor imperfect creatures like themselves; by death they shall gain the converse of saints in perfection, and be made so too. Here their companions are men, poor mortals; but death shall lead them into the society of glorious angels. Here they are members of the church militant, which has often been in danger, under clouds and darkness, sore broken in the place of dragons, and cover'd with the shadow of death; but then shall they belong to that august assembly, that are rais'd high above the reach of enemies, and dwell in those peaceful regions, where sorrow and sighing are no more known; but an air of divine pleasure fits on every face. Now they are join'd to imperfect societies, in which there is a mixture of carnal persons, formalists, and hypocrites; but then shall they enter into the church triumphant, in all her beautiful perfections, which the apostle thus elegantly describes, "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to

the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and, which crowns all, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant"^a.

'T WILL still have a farther tendency to lessen our aversion to death, when we consider, that the saints shall then be confirmed in a state of compleat holiness, and render'd like unfining angels; never shall they have any more inclinations to offend; vain thoughts, and evil desires shall never enter their holy breasts; they shall no more cast a longing eye after the sordid, criminal pleasures of this inferior clod; nor concern themselves, in the least, about the mean affairs of wretched mortals: Their sanctification shall then have received its last, its finishing stroke; and then shall they be everlastingly determined for God; they shall have a perpetual aversion to evil, and all their powers shall naturally run in the delightful channel of holiness and obedience: Every inhabitant of the bright and blessed world shall eternally shine in the beauties of holiness.

To increase our favourable opinion of death yet more, let me add, that 'twill give the Saints the intuition and fruition of God and Christ. Here we view God in his works, and wonder at the divine perfections; we conclude him to be a most glorious being, who has filled the world with such a variety of crea-

^a Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24.

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tures, and adorned the face of nature with so many inimitable beauties. We view the lights of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, and are ready to cry out, with wonder, How immensely glorious is that being, whose hand form'd all these, and whose transcendent beauties must infinitely surpass those of creatures! But, when once our souls are released from the incumbrance of the flesh, angels shall convey them to heaven; where they shall behold the great Archetype of holiness and source of beauty, and be even lost in delightful admiration. Our Lord has thus described the happiness of heaven, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God^a." The saints shall enjoy God's presence, which will communicate to them "fulness of joy and pleasures for ever more^b." Now we see God obscurely, through the mediums of his word and works, but then "face to face^c." This is an advantage gain'd by death.

It shall also mightily enlarge our faculties of loving, serving, and delighting in God. 'Tis thought, and not without good reason, that the operations of the soul are much obstructed by her conjunction with the body; but when once death has released her from that imprisonment, she shall then ascend to her native world, to her proper element; shall extend all her powers, and take her fill of God and glory. The saints in heaven shall love God more intensely, shall serve him more

^a Matt. v. 8.

^b Psal. xvi. 11.

^c 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

sublimely, than ever they could whilst on earth, and delight in him with incessant pleasure.

To which I might add, as another consideration to abate the terrors of death, and render it even amiable; that it shall join the saints in an eternal union to the Lord. Christ is the Head of the church; his people are join'd to him, at present, by spiritual bands; but, alas! there's a vast local distance between them; Christ is in heaven, his people upon earth; he in the upper world of holiness, his people in these territories of sin; but our glorified Lord will have all his people with him: He's gone to heaven that they may follow him: Blessed therefore is the soul that's releas'd by death, and join'd to the Lord for ever. When once we are got near to Christ in heaven, we shall no more be separated from him. As he's a head of influence to the church on earth, so of confirmation to the church in heaven; and happy, thrice happy, the souls that are with him there! This is a rich advantage gain'd by death.

AND lastly. To what unknown, inconceivable enjoyments of divine love shall death advance the saints! What sweetness do believers find in the foretastes of God's love communicated to them in this life! Ask the sincere Christian, what a blessing 'tis to enjoy the light of God's countenance, and be favour'd with his spiritual presence, he'll tell you, 'tis better than all the pleasures of the sons of men; that it vastly excels the highest enjoyments of the world;

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world; tho' these gracious visits are, in the present state, but short and interrupted: What infinite satisfactions then shall the glorified saints have, who rest in the bosom of Jesus, and drink at the fountain of life! The Father's love, in sending Christ to redeem us; of the Son, in exposing himself to so many sufferings, for us; together with the many pledges of God's favour to gracious souls here, leave us no room to doubt, that the saints above shall enjoy some vast, some unutterable sensations of divine love. There shall the joy of Christ's followers be full indeed; their holy transports shall rise high: There shall they delight in, praise, and enjoy God to everlasting ages; and taste the rich, abundant sweetness of his love. Happy state of departed saints! glorious enjoyments of the heavenly world! Blessed advantages that accrue from death! O death, we will no more look upon thee as our enemy! Dost thou perform so many kind offices for the saints, and put them into the possession of so many blessings! Surely then to depart hence is gainful, and death is our friend! henceforth we'll salute thee by the name of friend, invite thee as a welcome guest, and congratulate thy approaches towards us!

THUS have I endeavoured to shew how the death of a good man may be looked on as his great advantage. But, perhaps, it may, after all, be objected, How can death be stiled gain? Is it not rather a loss? for though the soul ascend to God, is not the body left behind in

a very dishonourable condition? in a vile contemptible state? rotting in the grave, and become the food of worms? Has not the soul lost her beloved partner? And may not that loss be supposed to administer some inquietude? To which I answer, notwithstanding all this, death is gain. Is it any loss to drop a body defiled with sin, in order to its being raised in the beauties of holiness? Is it loss to put off this corruptible flesh, to have it raised in incorruption? Is it loss to have a ruinous cottage demolished, that out of those ruins, a sumptuous palace may emerge? In all this, death is gain. The state of separate spirits is blessed and happy: Their separation from the body does not occasion any inquietude; and though there be, no doubt, a desire to re-unite; and therefore, when re-united, there shall be an additional glory; and so the happiness of the saints shall then be in its full perfection; yet, nevertheless, the separate spirits have immediately, at death, some felicitating enjoyments of God and Christ; otherwise St. Paul would not have declared, as he does in the text, that "death is gain." And, as in another place, that "he had a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." Besides which, they have a clear view of the future glories of the resurrection; in prospect of which, their joys rise, and their pleasures are increased: they look with vast delight to that happy season, when Christ shall make his illustrious appearance, and when they shall resume their
bodies,

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bodies and appear with him in glory; every view the blessed souls have of Christ's glorified body, is a noble testimony that the bodies of his saints shall also rise, and be adorn'd with a brightness and beauty like his. The bodies of the saints are not fallen under the power of sin and curse of the law; but are asleep in Christ under his care; they are not cast as into a prison; but lodg'd in a sacred repository: The ashes of the saints are blessed, and Christ has sanctified the grave; and though their bodies must indeed submit to death, through their union with Adam, the natural head; yet shall they be raised to immortality and glory, by union with Christ, their covenant head: Look therefore to the bright morning of the resurrection, and behold the happy spirits descending with their Lord from heaven: See them resuming their respective bodies, bodies not emaciated with age or sickness; not attended with pains and infirmities, as in the former state; but adorn'd with immortal youth, and richly drest in divine beauty: Since therefore, death is necessary to the purifying our bodies from sin, and to make way for the future glories of the resurrection; I will not doubt to pronounce it a blessing, and to say, death is gain. It remains now that I make some reflections on what has been offer'd concerning the advantages of death, And,

I. IF to die be so evidently, and in so many respects advantageous to a man, who has liv'd well and fear'd his Maker; then let these con-

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siderations

siderations explode a vulgar mistake, and reprove the faulty weakness of those, who account death an evil. Why are we afraid to die? Why are the saints through fears of death, subject to bondage? When a christian is afraid to die, it argues him ignorant of its advantages: Little dost thou think, O sincere believer, of the great good that is gain'd by this change: Afflictions and death are looked upon as barren land, that's esteem'd good for nothing; yet see it laden with a rich production of heavenly fruits; they appear on the surface but like a rugged hill, which yet if open'd, abounds with veins of gold. Why then, O christian, art thou afraid to die; since then thou shalt be deliver'd from so many evils, and advanc'd to the enjoyment of so much good? Art thou loath to forsake a sinful world, and unwilling to go to heaven? Wilt thou not consent to depart hence, tho' it be to enjoy Christ which is far better? Art thou not willing to be absent from the body, tho' thou shalt then be present with the Lord? Shake off, O christian, thy fond desires of the present life; let reason and religion overcome thy weakness, and teach thee to aspire after the life of heaven: Meditate on the upper and glorious world; with all its rich and various enjoyments; so shalt thou be reconciled to the thoughts of death, and discover a generous contempt of inferior things.

2. That death is so highly profitable to the saints, may moderate the sorrow of surviving relatives, concerning those who are departed in
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the faith of Christ : Shall we shew our selves displeas'd at the promotion of our friends; and afflict our selves about them, who are far happier than ever they were with us; who enjoy eternal rest and divine satisfactions in their Lord's kingdom? Shall we complain at this, that our friends are carried into the bosom of Christ, and convey'd safe within the gates of heaven? That they are got into the haven of rest, and shall no more be toss'd on this tempestuous ocean? Shall we dispute the will of God; and murmur at the death of our friends, dwelling upon our own loss, and forgetting their mighty advantages? Will not this look like envying their advancement, and repining at their honours? Rather let us compose our minds, and extol that rich grace of God, which prepar'd them for that heavenly kingdom; whilst with diligence we follow after, and exert our selves in God's service with all proper industry; that so we may e'er long meet them in heaven, and be our selves members of that illustrious assembly to which they are join'd.

3. BEHOLD here the benefits of Christ's death; is death advantageous to the saints, and become a friend to believers? Let us offer our praises to that almighty conqueror, who vanquish'd all our enemies, pluck'd out the sting of death, and stripp'd him of all his terrible armour. View death as a penalty for the broken covenant of works, and then extol that blessed Saviour who has deliver'd thee from the evils of death, and obtain'd for thee a covenant

of grace; these Waters were naturally bitter, but the wood of the cross has sweeten'd 'em: death by invading Christ has lost its poison, has lost its pernicious nature, and can do believers no harm; but puts 'em into the possession of much good. Hence therefore learn the value, the mighty esteem we ought to have for our Lord Jesus; let us honour and obey; let us serve and glorify him, who encounter'd our mortal enemies, and broke the powers of sin and death. O excellent Redeemer! O blessed Jesus! we offer thee our unfeigned praises, for the benefits of thy death; by which the death of thy people is made a blessing to them, and the great change, tho' it seem an enemy to nature, is become a friend to grace. Has the christian comfort under his afflictions? does the love of God refresh his soul; and has he hope in death? these blessings has a precious Saviour obtain'd for us. When we hear a christian expressing his confidence in God, and rejoicing in the pleasing views of his eternal state, look up to Christ, and say, " Bless the Lord, O my soul": think what a happiness 'tis to the believer, that he's not left to conflict with death in his own strength; but that the presence of his God and Saviour shall be with him: And that we have comfortable assurances from the holy scriptures, that the end of this life shall open into an eternal life of glory: Christians therefore, in these circumstances, can scarcely be said to die; that word seems rather applicable to the wicked, who fall under the curse;

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curse; of the saints, it's better said, that they have only quitted their former habitation, and exchang'd earth for heaven.

4. Is death the gain of the saints, and in so many respects advantageous to our pious friends who have liv'd to the Lord? let us see then that their death be also profitable to us who survive; it's pity that whilst they bear away so many benefits, we that remain, should be never the better: Is so great a prize put into our hands, and shall we foolishly neglect it? Is an opportunity of so huge advantage offer'd us, and shall we not consult our own interest? this would be stupidity indeed! Let us therefore make a wise improvement of so useful a providence; by their death may we be instructed how to live, and excited to the necessary preparation for eternity. 'Tis a good life only that can make death comfortable: 'tis a course of serious religion and godliness, that leads to a happy change, and a glorious immortality: Death will appear with a pleasant face, all mild and innocent to the righteous; but to the wicked, will he come cloath'd in terrors, and arm'd with plagues innumerable.

THUS, Sirs, you have heard the advantages which the saints find in death, and have had the mighty blessings which attend their departure from this world, laid before you; all which privileges, as we have great reason to hope, our deceas'd friend has found in death: From all those inconveniencies of this mortal state is he happily releas'd, and into all these
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enjoyments of the upper and glorious world is he enter'd. In the judgment of christian charity, we must needs say, that many years of his life were consecrated to God, and laid out in a suitable preparation for a future state: That he was a religious man, a lover of Christ, and his people, is well known to this society; and his morality, I presume, is no less known to the world. He was a tender affectionate husband, an indulgent father, and a faithful friend; fair and just in his dealings, and of a merciful disposition to the indigent; to which I may justly add, a lover of sincerity, and an utter enemy to all dissimulation. My opportunities of conversing with him were frequent, in which I always found him a lover of religious discourse; he often express'd a great concern for the interests of Christ's kingdom, lamented the prophaneness of the world, and lukewarmness of professors; and long'd to see the power of godliness revive. As to death, the thoughts of it were very familiar to him; he had long expected his great change, and been in a waiting posture for his Lord's coming. His gradual approaches towards eternity, did not at all shock him; for tho' this was his great request, that God wou'd afford him more clear and strong views of his love, and that his faith might grow up into an assurance of glory; yet he bless'd the Lord, that he was not destitute of a good and well-grounded hope of an interest in Christ, in whom he trusted, and through whose meritorious obedience and
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sufferings, he humbly expected acceptance with God. The scripture promises were no small support to him; such as these, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him"^a; and "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever"^b. But a short time before his death, he was much refresh'd with that passage; where the apostle speaking of the stability of the covenant of grace, says, "that God had confirm'd it by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for him to lie, that we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entreth into that within the Vail, whither the forerunner is for us entred, even Jesus." This afforded him many pleasing considerations, and he thus express'd his satisfaction to his loving companion; this forerunner is Christ, the place where he's enter'd within the vail is heaven; I hope we shall shortly follow him thither: Let us make haste to follow Christ, and get to him within the vail. These his desires, there's good rea-

^a Lam. iii. 24.
ad finem.

^b Psal. lxxiii. 24, 25, 26. Heb. vi.

son to believe, are now accomplish'd, that he's enter'd into his Lord's kingdom, and has found by experience, that to die is gain.

A WORD on this occasion to the society of which the deceas'd was a member: You have lost, my friends, an aged and a valuable member; one who has for many years join'd with you in the worship of God, and has this testimony from such of you as have known him longest; that he has fill'd up his place well, and walk'd honourably; 'tis your duty to be affected with this providence, and so to improve it, as that his death may be your gain: Several of you are of an advanced age, and must therefore expect shortly to follow him; I hope you think of it; I hope you prepare for it: See that you double your diligence in this important work; and God grant, that whenever we are removed hence, it may be our happiness to be transplanted into the church triumphant.

To the afflicted widow may I also be permitted to offer a word of comfort. You have lost, Madam, for the present, a very loving, affectionate husband, which cannot but fill you with concern; but your loss is his gain: Think therefore of that: you are separated, 'tis true, from the nearest and dearest of earthly relatives, death dissolves all these bands; but remember for your comfort, that the believing soul is join'd by indissoluble bonds, to the Lord. "Thy Maker is thy Husband (the Lord of Hosts is his name) and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth.

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earth^a." Trust in God, your everlasting friend, and rest on the engagements of that covenant, which shall never be broken. Call in the aids of God's Spirit, and proceed in his ways with diligence; and then you will, e'er long, meet him in heaven, from whom you are now separated by the stroke of death; and the glorified saints shall no more be divided from the pleasing society of each other, nor from the enjoyment of their Lord.

AND to you, the children of our departed friend, I would, with great seriousness, address my self on this occasion; and beg you to eye the hand of God, and hear the language of this providence, and take care that it be improv'd to your advantage: Remember the desires of your loving father; how earnestly did he long to have Christ form'd in you; to have you serious and godly, religious and holy: You know I am a witness to this, and can testify his tender regards to you in this respect: Let me beg, therefore, that you'll treasure up his reproofs, that you'll remember and practise his counsels: He desir'd that you should serve God; Will you not grant his desire? Will you deny so reasonable a request? a request so highly to your advantage? Is not a religious, godly life, a matter of great importance, a thing of everlasting consequence? This only can make death gainful, and render you happy for ever. To see us wisely husbanding our time, serving God, and living piously;

^a Isai. liv. 5.

I would even venture to say, communicates an additional pleasure to our departed friends. To behold us join'd to their common Lord, and on the way to heaven, makes the saints above, and the angels, to rejoice. To live soberly, righteously, and godly, is the truest respect we can possibly pay to the memory of our pious friends, and the only way to secure our own real, eternal advantage. Is your dear and tender, your good and religious parent, gone to heaven? and will you not be concern'd to follow him? Are his graces perfected? enquire whether yours are begun? Is he crown'd with glory, and in the enjoyment of Christ? But are you join'd to the Lord Jesus? He's deliver'd, we hope, from this world of sin; see whether your sins are sincerely repented of, and forsaken: Harken to the counsel of your departed father; yea, hearken to the counsels of God, and remember, "that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

AND lastly, let me call on you all, and beseech you, in the name, and by the authority of our Lord Jesus, that you every one accept the Redeemer, and lay hold of the great salvation offer'd in the gospel; that you forsake your sins, and devote your selves to God's service; and let this instance of mortality awaken every soul to a serious and lively preparation for eternity: See that you approve the conduct of your lives to God, and your own consciences;

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sciences; that so you may be able to say, like the apostle, "To me to live is Christ;" and then may you also, in the prospect of eternity, with the same reason and justice, assume his triumphant language, and say, "to die is gain." God help you to consider these things, and endue you with wisdom and grace, for the sake of Christ Jesus our Lord; to whom, with the Father, and Holy Spirit, be glory, honour, and dominion, for ever. Amen.

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